Numb. 177

The TATLER.

By *Iſaac Bickerſtaff* Eſq;

——— *Male ſi palpere, recalcitrat undique tutus.* Hor.

From *Thurſday May* 25. to *Saturday May* 27. 1710.

Sheer-Lane, May 26.

THE ingenious Mr. *Penkethman*, the Commedian, has lately left here a Paper or Ticket, to which is affixed a ſmall Silver Medal, which is to entitle the Bearer to ſee One and twenty Plays at his Theatre for a Guinea. *Greenwich* is the Place where, it ſeems, he has erected his Houſe; and his Time of Action is to be ſo contrived, that it is to fall in with going and returning with the Tide. Beſides, that the Bearer of this Ticket may carry down with him a particular Set of Company to the Play, ſtriking off for each Perſon ſo introduced one of his Twenty one Times of Admittance. In this Warrant of his, he has made me an high Compliment in a facetious Diſtich, by Way of Dedication of his Endeavours, and deſires I would recommend them to the World. I muſt needs ſay, I have not for ſome Time ſeen a properer Choice than he has made of a Patron: Who more fit to publiſh his Work than a Noveliſt? Who to recommend it than a Cenſor? This Honour done me, has made me turn my Thoughts upon the Nature of Dedications in general, and the Abuſe of that Cuſtom, as well by a long Practice of my Predeceſſors, as the continued Folly of my contemporary Authors.

In Ancient Times, it was the Cuſtom to addreſs their Works to ſome eminent for their Merit to Mankind, or particular Patronage of the Writers themſelves, or Knowledge in the Matter of which they treated. Under theſe Regards, it was a memorable Honour to both Parties, and a very agreeable Record of their Commerce with each other. Theſe Applications were never ſtuffed with impertinent Praiſes, but were the native Product of their Eſteem, which was implicitly received, or generally known to be due to the Patron of the Work: But vain Flouriſhes came into the World, with other barbarous Embelliſhments; and the Enumeration of Titles, and great Actions, in the Patrons themſelves, or their Sires, are as foreign to the Matter in Hand as the Ornaments are in a *Gothick* Building. This is clapping together Perſons which have no Manner of Alliance, and can for that Reaſon have no other Effect then making both Parties juſtly ridiculous. What Pretence is there in Nature for me to write to a great Man, and tell him, My Lord, becauſe your Grace is a Duke, your Grace's Father before you was an Earl, his Lordſhip's Father was a Baron, and his Lordſhip's Father both a wiſe and a rich Man, I *Iſaac Bickerſtaff* am obliged, and could not poſſibly forbear addreſſing to you the following Treatiſe. Tho' this is the plain Expoſition of all I could poſſibly ſay to him with a good Conſcience, yet the ſilly Cuſtom has ſo univerſally prevailed, that my Lord Duke and I muſt neceſſarily be particular Friends from this Time forward, or elſe I have juſt Room for being diſobliged, and may turn my Panegyrick into a Libel. But to carry this Affair ſtill more Home, were it granted that Praiſes in Dedications were proper Topicks, What is it that gives a Man Authority to commend, or what makes it a Favour to me that he does commend me? It is certain, that there is no Praiſe valuable but from the Praiſe-worthy. Were it otherwiſe, Blame might be as much in the ſame Hands. Were the Good and Evil of Fame laid upon a Level among Mankind, the Judge on the Bench, and the Criminal at the Bar, would differ only in their Stations; and if one's Word is to paſs as much as the other's, their Reputation would be much alike to the Jury. *Pliny* ſpeaking of the Death of *Martial*, expreſſes himſelf with great Gratitude to him for the Honours done him in the Writings of that Author; but he begins it with an Account of his Character, which only made the Applauſe valuable. He indeed in the ſame Epiſtle ſays, It is a Sign we have left off doing Things which deſerve Praiſe, when we think Commendation impertinent. This is aſſerted with a juſt Regard to the Perſons whoſe good Opinion we wiſh for; otherwiſe Reputation would be valued according to the Number of Voices a Man has for it, which are not always to be inſured on the more virtuous Side. But however we pretend to model theſe nice Affairs, true Glory will never attend any Thing but Truth; and there is ſomething ſo peculiar in it, that the very ſelf-ſame Action done by different Men cannot merit the ſame Degree of Applauſe. The *Roman*, who was ſurprized in the Enemy's Camp before he had accompliſhed his Deſign, and thruſt his bare Arm into a flaming Pile, telling the General, there were many as determined as himſelf who (againſt Senſe of Danger) had conſpired his Death, wrought in the very Enemy an Admiration of his Fortitude, and a Diſmiſſion with Applauſe. But the condemned Slave who repreſented him in the Theatre, and conſumed his Arm in the ſame Manner, with

with the same Resolution, did not raise in the Spectators a great Idea of his Virtue, but of him whom imitated in an Action no Way differing from that of the real *Scevola*, but in the Motive to it.

Thus true Glory is inseparable from true Merit, and whatever you call Men, they are no more than what they are in themselves; but a Romantick Sense has crept into the Minds of the Generality, who will ever mistake Words and Appearances for Persons and Things.

The Simplicity of the Ancients was as conspicuous in the Address of their Writings, as in any other Monuments they have left behind them. *Cesar* and *Augustus* were much more high Words of Respect, when added to Occasions fit for their Characters to appear in, than any Appellations which have ever been since thought of. The latter of these great Men had a very pleasant Way of dealing with Applications of this Kind. When he received Pieces of Poetry which he thought had Worth in them, he rewarded the Writer; but where he thought them empty, he generally returned the Compliment made him with some Verses of his own.

This latter Method I have a present Occasion to imitate. A Female Author has dedicated a Piece to me, wherein she would make my Name (as she has others) the Introduction of whatever is to follow in her Book; and has spoke some Panegyrical Things which I know not how to return, for Want of better Acquaintance with the Lady, and consequently being out of a Capacity of giving her Praise or Blame. All therefore that is left for me, according to the foregoing Rules, is to lay the Picture of a good and evil Woman before her Eyes, which are but meer Words if they do not concern her. Now you are to observe, the Way in a Dedication is to make all the rest of the World as little like the Person we address to as possible, according to the following Epistle:

MADAM,

But, M----

----- Memorabile nullum
Fœminea in Pœna est. -----

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